

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8987

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6852

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FPOR, MARR, BA

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT FOR MIDEASTFOR

REF: STATE 231711

1. AT MY REQUEST PM FRASER INDICATED IN MEETING YESTERDAY WITH SHAIKH KHALIFA BIN SALMAN AL-KHALIFA, BAHRAIN PN. THAT HE IS CONCERNED OVER SITUATION IN INDIAN OCEAN AND PERSIAN GULF AND HOPES US MIDEASTFOR WILL BE ABLE TO STAY IN BAHRAIN.

2. LAST NIGHT PM FRASER REPORTED TO ME THAT SHAIKH PROFESSED TO SHARE HIS CONCERN AND HOPED US FORCES COULD STAY IN PERSIAN GULF AND IN BAHRAIN. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, HE TOLD FRASER HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERN WAS A FEAR THAT US RESOLVE TO STAY IN AREA AND OPPOSE THE SOVIETS MIGHT WEAKEN IN NEW RETREAT TO ISOLATIONISM. HE CITED CONFLICT BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND NOTED OUR INABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH IN ANGOLA. FRASER NOTED SHAIKH IS STRONGLY ANTICOMMUNIST BUT DOES NOT WANT TO BE LEFT ON A LIMB AS US SUPPORTER IF US SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM AREA AND LEAVE IT TO SOVIETS.

3. THIS CONCERN IS THE SAME AS THAT COMMUNICATED BY JORDAN'S KING HUSSEIN TO FRASER DURING VISIT EARLIER THIS YEAR. FRASER HIMSELF IS ALSO MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAME THING, ALTHOUGH HE COMMENTED THAT ON HIS JULY TRIP
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TO US HE SAW REASSURING SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT IN THIS

AREA. I CITED THE FY 1977 DEFENSE BUDGET APPROVAL AS
EVIDENCE OF BASIC HARDENING OF RESOLVE AND HE CONCURRED.

4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND BAHRAIN APPEAR TO
BE VERY GOOD AND INCREASED TRADE AND COMMERCIAL RELATION-
SHIPS ARE BEING OPTIMISTICALLY DISCUSSED AT MEETINGS HERE.
AMONG OTHER THINGS, NEWSPAPERS TODAY CARRY STORY THAT
BAHRAINIS MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN JOINT SHIPPING PLAN WHICH
COULD HELP VERY SICK AUSTRALIAN SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY.
HARGROVE

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